Through the land of smoke in foreign skin

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/27126428.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Gen
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Character:	Abigail Hobbs
Additional Tags:	POV Second Person, Stream of Consciousness
Language:	English
Series:	Part 11 of October Writing Experiments 2020 👁👄👁
Stats:	Published: 2020-10-20 Words: 1,354 Chapters: 1/1

Through the land of smoke in foreign skin

by celestialcello

Summary

Yet you didn’t feel sad, couldn’t - your heart has never been human, what flows through it is not blood but unsettled thoughts and nebulous affections. Sometimes you looked into the mirror (the lacklustre, half-lidded eyes, various shades of blue like a summer lake viewed from afar) and wondered how could anyone thought they happened upon a deer.

==========

A short character study of Abigail Hobbs, written for the prompts Fourreur and Fumée (https://www.instagram.com/tarmasz/?hl=en) :D

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Pt1: Le Chausseur Maudit

You always went to them in your quiet steps, a timid yet expectant smile, your breath melted in the hint of uncertainty around the curl of your fingers, the way you tilted your head so your eyes met. They saw you as a fawn venturing down the forest lane dappled with ponds of early autumn sun, beside a lake where the sunrise forever a glowing ardour, the moon wore the night clouds, gossamer haze around her tender touch. A forest where the deers rejoice in carefree steps and where carnivores were chased away in shadows. A forest where the hunter never pulled laid his hand on a blade, never owned a gun.

You turned your head to watch, and know that last night the hunter sharpened its knife on your antlers while you slept, or pretended to. Do you remember the time when sharp fangs pushed through the soft, smooth teeth and drew blood from your tongue when you licked on its edge? You must do - the morning when you put on the skin for the first time, you found something glinting at the bottom of the bowl.

You quietly showed it to the hunter. That summer you had a new wind bell chiming outside your window, white beads hanging along linen strings like raindrops caught in time, like pearls from the heart of the ocean. Your mother made cherry pie that day, laughed at the hunter's joke and you wondered at the pastel blush high on her cheek when he called her 'beautiful'. You laughed with them too, chewing on your venison stew and wondered that this must be love.

Must it not be, this love that resonates in the soundless night sky across the forest? And all forests are indefinite land of shadows, they do not exist in light alone. It is under the blessing of night, and night alone, that reality grows. And didn't you rejoice in the company of the hunter, his steady hand over your itching claws. You felt his hunger (for food and for love alike), pitied him, but your own stomach was just as empty, if not more so.

You knew in those small hours before the morning ascends when the hunter holds his knife against your neck. Sometimes you would stand in that exact spot, and imagined peeling back the ill-fitted, tattered skin yourself. The new fur was enough to keep you warm, would enough to shelter you from the insatiable appetite of the hunter, enough to shelter the secret among the woods.

When you carved them open to capture the rising steam from the still-beating hearts from the carcasses bearing your old skin, your tears fell into the crimson river and disappeared. Yet you didn't feel sad, couldn't - your heart has never been human, what flows through it is not blood but unsettled thoughts and nebulous affections. Sometimes you looked into the mirror (the lacklustre, half-lidded eyes, various shades of blue like a summer lake viewed from afar) and wondered how could anyone thought they happened upon a deer.

You galloped down the forest lane with the hunter, and everyday now you could hear him screaming silently under his skin, hungry, hungry, hungry-
He wanted a bite of your flesh, seasoned in salt and pepper and seared in homemade herbed butter, the centre still pink engulfed by browned crust. You refused to let the agitation through, soon, you thought, soon, you could throw yourself into the vast of land outside the

boundary of the forest, you could drown it in lights and sounds and all things tangible. And you believed that when you looked back on its outline someday, you wouldn't even be able to figure out its gaze through the thick shroud of smoke.

That morning in the kitchen, you picked up the phone, and knew that you were one step too late when you caught the hunter's shivering fingers around the black plastic long after the call was hanged up. You threw one last sorrowful look at your mother, not because you could not save her - you never tried to, anyway. You were lamenting because the hunter descended into his madness, at long last.

Pt2: La Terre de Fumée

Your skin changed, again, and with it your bones. They glowed raven under the muted twilight, outgrowing from the open seam like meandering dendrums of unseen trees breathing the new air for the first time.

The book was turned into a new page, you travelled down the blanks in between the curves and turns of the text, and gleaned from them the hint of glimmering fever pervasive in this new land. They too had sunk their dull teeth into the skin of deers. Yours were decidedly sharper, they shone like quicksilver under the moon. You tested their serrated tips first on the man who rescued you from the hunter (or the hunter from you by the power of metal?) - you got under his frail, sickening skin and tasted the the same blood as the hunter who once clothed you in furs and hairs. You wondered if you could rebuild the family you were bereft of, with gleaming yet carefully hidden cuspids, scarlet tongues and hands that guided in gentle coax?

Yet the nature of the new earth was yet to be revealed to you, you chose to be cautious and careful. Its bizarre creatures lurked and disappeared constantly to the treacherous and uncertain paths stretching beyond your sight. For one thing you knew for certain was that on the fateful morning, you spoke with a resident from the shadow for the first time, and perhaps you would travel to him, your first signpost, the origin.

You didn't miss the flicker of surprised joy when you proposed that the psychiatrist should resume his role at the other end of the phone so you could whisper to him 'I know, too'.

You hid a body that night, marvelling at how simple it was to find your own kind outside the cradle of grounds paved in pine needles and moist muds. Overjoyed, you missed the chasm underneath the smile when you traded the oath of secrecy with the creature.

Little did you know, in the land of shadow there were only infidelity and treachery until when the maker of the land surrendered himself to the merciless alacrity of love, of a different kind from the one you learned from the hunter. The images of guardian angels you had built were but that, images, insubstantial smokes bearing the resemblance to a thousand phantoms and a million words. Just when you thought you have pinned them down on a white board like moths you captured from the rift of light, the certainty would simply evaporate into the thin air irrespective of your despaired hollers and enraged fears.

Perhaps you shouldn't have left the forest in the first place. Your eyes were not perspicacious enough to read the rules of the foreign country, your craft unsophisticated, your steps were just a hint too loud to keep you safe among the walls. Your furs couldn't shelter you from the

false promise of light anymore, but you were already blind when you traded your fang for a spot at the dinner table, breakfast at the hour of night. Perchance a tea party as well? The teapot was forever empty and you breathed in the hypnotising steam.

You shattered the teacup. Have you thought about the moment often afterwards? You should, it was the moment you demolished the path out of the rabbit hole. Your skin felt foreign as you were promised changes and everything anew.

Do you know why the raven is like a writing desk?

Pt3: Le peau brisé

You dwelled uncomfortably underground for months. Impatient, enervated, gradually realising that you had relinquished your teeth for nothing in return. Things were not under your control, they never were. You had an inkling that you would never leave the land of the shadow.

And perhaps when you drowned in your own blood, the warmth finally returned, like the deer skin you used to hide under and sleep upon.

End Notes

Thanks for reading!❤️

For some reason I was seeing a lot of Abigail-related content on my dash over the weekend. And despite the fact that her arc has not been one of my favourite, there was still a lot of interesting themes and motives in her story! And because I don't have time to write a meta, I decided to dedicate a short piece exploring her experience with the events leading up to her alliance with Hannibal and downfall in Mizumono. It is an understatement, and hopefully by the end of this year I can come back and expand on it a bit more on the hasty ending:D

The next few prompts also just scream Chiyoh!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!